Colchester Youth First Coalition

June 30, 2025

To: John M. Zavalick, School Resource Officer, Colchester Police
From: Russell Melmed, Chair, Colchester Youth Services Advisory Board

Officer Zavalick,

At the June 30, 2025, special meeting of the Colchester Youth Services Advisory Board, a majority of members of the board voted to approve your request for an allocation from the Opioid Settlement Fund for the costs associated with the implementation of a school therapy dog program.

The justification for approving this expense under the settlement agreement can be found in Exhibit E, Schedule B, Part Two, Section G: Prevent Misuse of Opioids
Number 11. ***Support evidence-informed programs or curricula to address mental health needs of young people who may be at risk of misusing opioids or other drugs, including emotional modulation and resilience skills.***

Based on your presentation to the Board at our June 4, 2025 meeting and a review of your written proposal, the trained therapy dog will be deployed in Colchester Public Schools during normal school hours, and will participate in existing school-based mental health programs, social-emotional learning groups, individual counseling sessions, and provide de-escalation support. The presence of a certified therapy dog will enhance these evidence-based interventions, which are expected to reach youth who are at risk of misusing opioids. Therefore, the board has determined that this both complies with the terms of the settlement agreement and will help prevent the misuse of opioids among youth in Colchester.

The allocation of funding under the approved motion is conditional on approval of the program by the Colchester Board of Education. Under the approved motion, you are authorized to spend up to $2,500 from the Opioid Settlement Fund over 1-year on the following:
Therapy Training & Certification
Veterinary Care
Grooming
Food
Supplies (Crate, Leash, poop bags, toys)
Liability Insurance

We will consider additional allocations to support future years if the program is successful and as funding allows.

Colchester Youth First Coalition

Respectfully Submitted,

Russell S. Melmed
Chair, Colchester Youth Services Advisory Board
Youth First Coalition

CC: Colchester Board of Selectmen
Colchester Board of Education
Colchester Youth and Social Services